

YOUTH HOMES INC.  
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February 4, 2009

Chairperson Henry and Members of the Committee

We provide five (5) therapeutic group homes serving 27 children and youth ages 4 through 17 in different settings and funds in the CFSD foster care budget pay the room and board costs for supporting these in treatment in the community.

We provide four (4) other group homes serving 24 youth in shorter term emergency shelter and long term care for those in transition to adulthood. These programs are fully funded and paid through the CFSD foster care budget.

Rates in fully funded group home out of CFSD funds are those most short of actual costs of all services we provide children, youth and their families.

Our budget for these groups homes total about \$2M and we have to raise almost \$400,000, 20% of the total costs, to balance our annual operating budget.

Those young people served in our programs are identified by child protection workers, school personnel, youth courts, mental health case managers and many are identified by their families who are exhausted with nothing left that works.

The youngsters we serve feel safe, get consistency, learn to trust adults, attend school regularly, have success there, learn to do service, move out into families and feel connected to their community. They graduate high school, get a GED, are good workers and many, many serve their Country by serving in the military. May come back when the fees stop and check in with those they remember cared and my staff give back.

I am asking you to consider three things:

1. Support child protection workers in making our most vulnerable children safe by not applying the 7% vacancy rates and treat them as you would law enforcement and corrections workers and consider a rate of 3.5% or less;
2. Meet the increasing costs to providers who serve these children in partnership with the State by giving a 3% rate increase in the coming fiscal year and 2% in the following year – to pay for gasoline, insurance, food and maintain the gains we made in the last two sessions that improved wages for line workers in our homes and programs; and,
3. Make sure that the amount placed in the CFSD foster care budget to cover increased room and board rates from a shift in the ratio of treatment to care from the current 80-20 ratio to one at 70-30 or 60-40.

Thank you for the time to address the Committee and for your consideration of the many needs of Montana and I hope you rank these children as high as any in making your deliberations.

Thanks you

*Geoffrey*

Geoffrey Birnbaum  
Executive Director